The PRISONER releaſed:

A

SERMON,

On MATTHEW XXV. 36.

PREACHED IN

Charlotte-ſtreet and Bedford Chapels,

AND PUBLISHED

BY PARTICULAR REQUEST,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

UNFORTUNATE PERSONS, confined for

SMALL DEBTS.

By WILLIAM DODD, LL. D.

Preacher at the above Chapels, and Chaplain to the KING.

OH LET THE SORROWFUL SIGHING OF THE PRISONERS COME BEFORE THEE!

Pſalm lxxix. 12.

The THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed by W. FADEN.

And ſold by S. LEACROFT, at the Globe, at Charing Croſs, 1775.

[Price Three-pence.]

A

SERMON,

On Matthew XXV. 36.

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By WILLIAM [illegible], LL.D.

[illegible]

BRITISH MUSEUM

[illegible]

Visits unto me. Ib.

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LONDON:

Printed by W. TAPLIN,

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Charing Cross, 1775.

[Price Three-pence.]

ADVERTISEMENT

To the preſent EDITION.

March 17, 1773.

FROM the PREFACE ſubjoined and the REPORT of the Committee, the Reader will learn the beginning and the progreſs of this charitable undertaking. After the publication of the Sermon, the Committee found themſelves enabled, by the liberal bounty of the well-diſpoſed, to extend their views, and to reach out the Hand of Mercy and Relief to a much greater number of unfortunate Priſoners. So that the general account of the Charity now ſtands as follows:

	£.	s.	d.
BENEFACTIONS, as by the laſt Report, of this Day.	2496	10	10
DISBURSEMENTS,	2408	17	11
Ballance in hand	£. 87	12	11

With which 807 Priſoners have been diſcharged, and many others relieved, moſt of whom have large families, (conſiſting of a Wife, and from three even to nine or ten Children) ſolely depending upon them for bread.

A more particular *Account* of the *Benefactions*, according to the order in which they were received, is added to this Advertiſement, and an exact *alphabetical* detail of the *perſons diſcharged* and *relieved*, together with their reſpective families, ſituation and circumſtances, hath been drawn up by the

care of the Committee, and is left open at the *Thatch'd Houſe Tavern* for the inſpection of the Benefactors, and ſuch other humane perſons as wiſh to promote this benevolent plan. From thence it will appear that far the greater number of the objects diſcharged are MANUFACTURERS, whoſe uſeful and induſtrious labours, cut off from Society by their ſecluſion in a Priſon, are thus reſtored to the Publick: So that the Charity in queſtion claims attention not only from the humanity of its deſign, but alſo from the advantages which it derives to the Community in general.

On a review of the Books it likewiſe appears that various conſiderable Debts, to the amount of 10,000l. and upwards, have been ſo compounded and reduced, as to bring the objects relieved in thoſe inſtances, within the ſcope and original intention of the Charity; and at the time of compounding ſuch Debts equal attention was conſtantly paid to the peculiar circumſtances both of the Creditor and his Debtor.

Nor hath the attention of the Committee been limited to the preſent welfare of the ſubjects whom they have ſet at Liberty; it hath been extended, where poſſible, to their future welfare. Some of the diſeaſed and friendleſs have been recommended to the notice of the public Charities of this Metropolis; the Magdalen, the Lock, the Lying-in-Hoſpital: And we beg leave thus to acknowledge the ready aſſiſtance of the Gentlemen who direct thoſe Inſtitutions.

Many objects ſtill remaining unrelieved, and calling loudly for pity and deliverance, it hath been reſolved by the Committee to print a Third Edition of this diſcourſe, at a low price, to be diſperſed by the well-wiſhers to the Charity; and every Benefactor who is deſirous to have copies for that purpoſe, will be readily ſupplied on making application in writing at the *Thatch'd Houſe Tavern*.

Zealous and deſirous to promote the good work, from whence they ſee ſo much comfort ariſing to their diſtreſſed Fellow-creatures, the gentlemen concerned are determined to omit no means of giving it ſtability and ſucceſs. To this end they propoſe to continue their Meeting every *Wedneſday* evening, as before, at the *Thatch'd Houſe* in St. James's Street. And having formed no diſtinct or excluſive Society, nor eſtabliſhed any ſpecific ſum as a qualification for Governors, or the like, they beg leave to inform the Benefactors in particular, and the Public in general, that their Committee is entirely open; and that they ſhall think themſelves happy in the company and counſel of any nobleman or gentleman who may pleaſe to attend, whether he hath already contributed, or only intends to do ſo.

☞ In the infancy of this Charity, the Committee, hardly ſanguine enough to expect ſo liberal an encouragement, did not take an accurate account of the Wives and Families of the Priſoners releaſed. However, from an inſpection of their Books, there now appears to have been 807 perſons diſcharged, together with 433 Wives, and 2033 Chil-

2033 Children, amounting in all to 3273 ſouls, relieved by means of the public humanity, within little more than the ſpace of twelve months ſince the commencement of the Inſtitution.

BENEFACTIONS continue to be received at the *Thatch'd Houſe Tavern*, in *St. James's Street*; by Mr *Leacroft*, Bookſeller, at *Charing-Croſs*; and at the following Bankers, viz. Meſſrs. *Dorrien, Rucker*, and *Carleton*, in *Finch-lane, Cornhill*; Meſſrs. *Hoares*, in *Fleet-ſtreet*; Meſſrs. *Biddulph* and *Cocks*, at *Charing-croſs*; and the *London Exchange Banking Company*, in *St. James's-ſtreet*.

BENE-

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
Collection at Charlotte-Street and Bedford Chapels,	81	1	0
Wm. Becher, Esq; by Dr. Dodd,	5	5	0
C. D. by Mr. Leacroft,	10	0	0
Mr. R. Dixon,	0	10	6
B. W.	0	10	6
Anonymous, by Mr. Willis,	1	1	0
Sundries, by Mr. Steuart,	0	10	6
Wm. Bayntun, Esq;	5	5	0
Two gentlemen, by Mr. Neild,	2	2	0
Philanthropos, by Mr. Nelme,	1	1	0
An unknown Benefactor	100	0	0
Three Ladies and one Gentleman, by Mr. Neild,	4	4	0
J. Delmé, Esq;	5	5	0
M. L.	5	5	0
Unknown, by Mr. Leacroft,	3	3	0
J. M. Esq; by Mr. Nelme	1	1	0
Lady Frances Coningsby,	10	10	0
Right Hon. Lord Chief Baron Smythe,	5	5	0
Lady Smythe,	2	2	0
Mr. T. his first Benefaction,	1	1	0
Sir R. C——,	1	1	0
Lady C——,	2	2	0
Mr. F. S——,	1	1	0
Right Hon. Lord Vere,	5	5	0
Earl of Breadalbane,	5	5	0
Lady Fitzgerald,	5	5	0
W. L	2	2	0
J. B	100	0	0
W. P. his first Benefaction,	5	5	0
Henry Hawley, Esq;	5	5	0
Unknown, by Mr. Willis,	1	1	0
Mrs. Rich,	2	2	0

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
Mr. Wilford,	1	1	0
Mrs. White,	1	1	0
John Thornton, Esq; his first Benefaction,	20	0	0
Mr. Townsend,	1	1	0
Lady Edward Clive,	2	2	0
Mr. Bridgeman, for sundries,	1	1	0
J. Flower,	0	10	6
A. B.	1	1	0
P. G.	10	0	0
A. D.	5	5	0
M. H. a first Benefaction,	1	1	0
Hon. Dowager Lady Young, her first Benefaction,	20	0	0
Messrs. Biddulph and Cocks, Bankers,	5	5	0
Lady Frances Boscawen,	2	2	0
T, C.	2	2	0
A. B.	20	0	0
Rev. Mr. Craven,	1	1	0
Hon. Mrs. Trevor,	3	3	0
Mrs. Jebb,	2	2	0
Mrs. Wheeler,	5	5	0
Miss C.	1	1	0
Mr. Du-Bellamy,	1	1	0
U. F.	5	5	0
A. B. by Messrs. Biddulph and Cocks,	5	5	0
Right Hon. Earl of Radnor,	5	5	0
W. H.	1	1	0
N. E.	3	3	0
Noah, Daniel, and Job,	3	9	0
Unknown, by Messrs. Dorrien and Co.	1	1	0
R. Salloway, Esq; his first Benefaction,	5	5	0
S. D. M.	1	1	0
T. P.	0	10	6
F. T.	1	1	0
A. B. at Messrs. Hoares,	5	5	0
A Jew,	1	1	0
T. T.	1	1	0
Anonymous, by Mr. Leacroft,	5	5	0
M. L.	1	1	0

Lau-

	£.	s.	d.
Laurence Beauchamp, Eſq;	1	1	0
D. H.	1	1	0
J. F.	0	10	6
J. R.	0	10	6
S. C.	0	10	6
M. C.	0	10	6
S. P. G.	5	5	0
C. B.	1	1	0
Miſs Lockhart,	2	2	0
Right Hon. Earl of Hertford,	30	0	0
Haughton James, Eſq;	10	10	0
Lord Willoughby de Broke,	5	5	0
Hon. Mr. Juſtice Nares,	5	5	0
G. N. of Chelſea,	2	2	0
Mrs. Harenc,	1	1	0
Mrs. Marianne Hayes,	1	1	0
Deborah, by Mr. Winterbottom,	20	0	0
Sidney Evelyn, M. L.	1	1	0
Hon. Mr. Yorke,	10	0	0
Right Hon. Lady Windſor,	10	10	0
John Thornton, Eſq; ſecond Benefaction,	20	0	0
Lawrence Aſhbourne, Eſq;	5	5	0
Mrs. F. R.	1	1	0
John Barnard, Eſq; of Berkley Square,	5	5	0
C. M.	5	5	0
A Lady unknown, by Meſſrs. Biddulph and Cocks,	2	2	0
Mr. John Goff of Ipſwich,	1	1	0
James Norman, Eſq;	10	0	0
A perſon unknown,	0	5	3
A. W.	2	2	0
A. P.	1	1	0
Henry Johnſon, Eſq;	2	2	0
D. C. at Meſſrs. Biddulph and Cocks's,	3	3	0
J. Boldero, Eſq;	5	5	0
J. B.	2	2	0
X. Y.	1	1	0
Anonymous	1	1	0

Mr.

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
Mr. Thomas Adderley,	2	12	6
Mr. R. T. his ſecond Benefaction,	2	2	0
Robert Nettleton, Eſq;	10	10	0
Hon. John Moleſworth,	5	5	0
Laurence Beauchamp, Eſq; ſecond Benefaction,	1	1	0
H.	0	10	6
Lord Biſhop of Peterborough,	5	5	0
A Nobleman C. C.	10	10	0
Sir Charles Bunbury, Bart.	10	10	0
S. B.	3	3	0
A. B.	10	0	0
F. S. his ſecond Benefaction,	1	1	0
John Thornton, Eſq; third Benefaction,	20	0	0
Anonymous, by Mr. Goff of Ipſwich,	1	1	0
Mrs. Heſter Greville,	3	3	0
A Clergyman,	1	1	0
Right Hon. Earl of Radnor, ſecond Benefaction,	5	5	0
Counteſs of Radnor	5	5	0
Anonymous, by Mr. Leacroft,	1	1	0
J. W.	1	1	0
R. H.	10	0	0
R. D. his ſecond Benefaction,	1	1	0
Anonymous, ſubſcribed "From an heart bleſſed with humanity,	5	5	0
A. Z, his firſt Benefaction,	20	0	0
Hon. Mr. Yorke, his ſecond Benefaction,	10	0	0
C. P. G.	3	3	0
G. E.	3	3	0
Homo	1	1	0
A. B.	5	5	0
Fine from a Hackney Coachman,	0	5	0
G. G.	2	2	0
A perſon unknown,	1	1	0
Mr. and Mrs. H.	3	3	0
Right Hon. Earl of Hardwicke,	10	10	0

Right.

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
Right Hon. Lord Chief Baron Smythe, his ſecond Benefaction,	5	5	0
Lady Smythe, Ditto,	2	2	0
P. F.	10	0	0
Lord Pigot,	1	1	0
T. C**n.	5	5	0
I. B.	3	3	0
M. T.	5	5	0
Lady Milner,	2	2	0
E. W.	2	2	0
Anonymous,	3	3	0
Miſs Stuffit,	1	1	0
D. H. a ſecond Benefaction,	1	1	0
I. L.	2	2	0
Robert Thompſon, Eſq; his third Benefaction,	2	2	0
His Grace the Archbiſhop of Canterbury,	20	0	0
The Lord Biſhop of London	10	10	0
John Thornton, Eſq; his fourth Benefaction, being the money returned from his Subſcription to the Plan for reducing the price of Butcher's meat.	7	0	0
A. B. by Mr. Nelme,	10	0	0
J. W	5	5	0
W. H.	5	5	0
N. N.	3	3	0
James Vere, Eſq;	3	3	0
The Rev. F. Bacon,	3	3	0
B. Y.	2	2	0
J. W.	2	2	0
F. S.	2	2	0
W. K.	2	2	0
R. M.	2	2	0
R. P.	2	2	0
A. B.	2	2	0
M. F.	1	1	0

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
Y. Z.	1	1	0
F. T.	1	1	0
J. J. A.	1	1	0
J. H.	1	1	0
Lord Biſhop of Wincheſter,	10	10	0
Lord Beauchamp	10	10	0
A Lady, by the Hon. Mr. Walſingham,	8	8	0
Naſh, Eddowes, and Patrie,	10	10	6
W. C.	1	1	0
J. Y.	2	2	0
R. P.	2	2	0
John Whiſton, Eſq;	4	4	0
Mr. Barker of Lyndon, Rutlandſhire,	5	5	0
B. a ſecond Benefaction,	5	5	0
F. R. S.	5	5	0
Mrs. M. H. her ſecond Benefaction,	2	2	0
Lady Griffin,	2	2	0
M. C. by Mr. Peters,	2	2	0
S. A.	1	1	0
A. B.	1	1	0
C. W.	1	1	0
S. E.	1	1	0
A perſon unknown, by W. W.	20	0	0
London Exchange Banking Company, in St. James's Street,	10	10	0
Lord Folkſtone,	5	5	0
Iſaac Hawkins Browne, Eſq;	10	10	0
Unknown, a ſecond benefaction,	6	6	0
J. R.	10	0	0
G. H. by Mr. Adderley,	1	1	0
Sir Sidney Medows,	50	0	0
Miſs Hockley,	5	5	0
D. S.	2	2	0
Joſeph Edwards,	2	2	0
J. W.	1	1	0
Sir John Griffin Griffin, Bart.	20	0	0
John Buller, Eſq;	10	10	0
William Gardner, Eſq;	10	10	0

S. G.

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
S. G.	1	1	0
A. B.	1	1	0
J. F.	3	3	0
C. S. N.	3	3	0
Mr. Robert Sanxay,	2	2	0
Mrs. A. C.	2	2	0
Hon. Dowager Lady Young, her ſecond Benefaction,	20	0	0
A. Z. his ſecond Benefaction,	20	0	0
Sir Sampſon Gideon, Bart.	20	0	0
Lady Frances Coningſly, her ſecond Benefaction,	10	10	0
Ph. B.	20	0	0
Mr. Alderman Trecothick,	10	10	0
H. H. Junior,	5	5	0
Henry Hoare, Eſq; and Co.	21	0	0
L. S. C.	2	2	0
Robert Goſling, Eſq;	2	2	0
R. C.	3	3	0
J. Paroiſſien,	0	10	6
Ann Myles,	1	11	6
B. D. R. A.	10	10	0
S. M.	3	3	0
A. K.	1	1	0
B. K.	1	9	4
William Wilſon, Eſq;	20	0	0
Mr. William Watſon,	3	3	0
W. P. his ſecond Benefaction,	2	2	0
Mr. Evans,	2	2	0
H. Z.	1	1	0
F. C.	1	1	0
S. R.	2	2	0
From the Grand Jury for the City and Liberty of Weſtminſter,	5	5	0
His Grace the Duke of Devonſhire,	10	10	0
The Rev. the Provoſt of Eton,	5	5	0
A. A.	2	2	0
The Earl of Buckinghamſhire,	21	0	0

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
W. W.	2	2	0
J. B.	3	3	0
Mrs. A. H.	2	2	0
Mr. F. M. H.	5	5	0
Mr. J. R.	2	2	0
F. A.	1	1	0
E. L.	2	2	0
Unknown,	5	5	0
H. R.	5	5	0
Z. Z. Z.	10	10	0
A Lady unknown,	1	1	0
A.	0	6	9
T. C.	1	1	0
F. E.	3	3	0
D. W.	3	3	0
The Right Hon. Lord King,	10	0	0
A. B.	5	5	0
The Hon. Rob. Boyle Walsingham, Esq; a Legacy left by L. Osborne,	208	0	0
Rt. Hon. Earl of Guildford,	10	10	0
W. N.	10	10	0
Unknown,	5	5	0
M. H. by Mr. Turner,	2	2	0
J. R.	0	10	6
E. I.	1	1	0
G. P.	2	2	0
D. B.	2	2	0
Lieut. Governor Boys,	1	1	0
Mrs. Anna Maria Tracy,	5	5	0
From the Old Club at Le Tellier's, Half-moon-street, in Piccadilly,	22	1	0
D. W.	5	5	0
J. B.	1	1	0
F. M.	1	1	0
R. D.	1	1	0
Y. Y. Y.	5	5	0
Lord Bishop of Landaff,	5	5	0
E**n,	25	0	0

BENEFACTIO

	£.	s.	d.
B. X.	0	10	6
D. E.	2	2	0
W. W.	10	10	0
Miss Boyle, by Mr. Walsingham,	2	2	0
M. C.	2	2	0
L. M.	10	10	0
T. T.	5	5	0
Mrs. R. B.	15	0	0
E. V. M.	1	1	0
J. R.	1	1	0
C. E.	10	0	0
A. B.	1	1	0
A Lady, by Messf. Coutts,	5	5	0
D. H. a further benefaction,	3	3	0
Rev. Mr. Hewett,	1	1	0
Mr. Parish,	1	1	0
Rev. Mr. Canning,	0	10	6
E. I.	3	3	0
W. A.	10	10	0
T. E. Freeman, Esq;	5	5	0
M. S.	2	2	0
M. T.	1	1	0
Lord Sondes,	10	10	0
Lady Sondes,	5	15	0
S. B.	3	3	0
M. E. M.	1	1	0
Earl of Bristol,	20	0	0
Sir Horatio Mann, Bart.	5	5	0
S. R.	2	2	0
J. R.	1	1	0
Hon. Walter Molesworth,	10	0	0
R. T.	1	1	0
H. P.	1	1	0
T. A.	2	2	0
Society of Gentlemen, meeting at the George and Vulture Tavern, Cornhill, by Mr. Henry Rutt	21	0	0
O. A. L. S. S. D.	25	4	0
	L—		

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
I— J— C—	10	10	0
P. P.	2	2	0
Mrs. T. Y. her ſecond benefaction,	1	1	0
W. W.	5	5	0
E. W.	2	2	0
Mr. S——e,	5	5	0
Mrs. C. M.	5	5	0
S. G.	1	1	0
X. T.	2	2	0
T. T.	2	2	0
The Dean of Exeter,	5	5	0
Richard Salloway, Eſq; his 2d benefaction,	5	5	0
Rev. Mr. Sherlock Willis,	5	5	0
S. Thornton, Eſq; Clapham,	20	0	0
Unknown, a third benefaction,	3	3	0
G. S.	0	10	6
Hon. Miſs Poyntz,	1	1	0
Mr. G. Greive,	1	1	0
Capt. S. D.	1	1	0
Baron Dimſdale,	10	10	0
J. J.	0	10	6
Mr. Ximenes,	1	1	0
Sundry Gentlemen, by A. B.	31	10	0
J. B. M.	5	5	0
J. F. B.	5	5	0
M. T.	1	1	0
E. W.	5	5	0
Humanus,	1	1	0
C. E.	5	5	0
F. G.	1	1	0
From the Committee of the Pantheon, by Meſſ. Scottney and Donnellan,	50	0	0
W. B.	21	0	0
E. M.	2	2	0
M. F.	1	1	0
Mr. Edward Neale,	2	12	6
J. P.	3	10	0
Unknown, from Bath,	1	1	0

BENEFACTIONS.

	£.	s.	d.
John ZephaniahHolwell, Eſq; -	50	0	0
Unknown, by Mr. Neild, -	2	2	0
G. E. by ditto,	3	3	0
F. C.	1	1	0
S. B.	1	1	0
George Colman, Eſq;	10	10	0
Unknown,	2	2	0
Rev. Anthony Webſter,	1	1	0
S. C.	5	5	0
J. W.	5	5	0
G. A.	3	3	0
The Executors of the late Mr. Daniel Remy, of St. Ann's Weſtminſter, Leather-ſeller,	100	0	0
	£2496	10	10

PREFACE

To the First EDITION.

April 22, 1772.

STRUCK with compaſſion for the miſeries of thoſe unfortunate men, who are cruelly "ſecluded from all the comforts and advantages of Society for inconſiderable Debts," the Author of this diſcourſe determined to attempt ſomething, on his part, for their relief. And well knowing the benevolence and charity of thoſe Congregations with whom he has the happineſs to be connected, he reſolved to ſolicit from the Pulpit their humane aſſiſtance. He was not diſappointed in his hopes; an handſome collection was made; and, to his great ſatisfaction, a general approbation of the undertaking expreſſed. Nor was money alone imparted freely: A ſet of gentlemen, with the utmoſt readineſs, formed themſelves into a Committee for the diſtribution of the Charity; and, with uncommon pains and application, ſought out the proper Objects, and relieved them. It is ſcarce to be credited, that ſo much good could be done with ſo ſmall a ſum; but the merit of this is wholly due to the Gentlemen of the Committee, who have ſpared no toil, nor omitted any meaſures, to diſcharge their truſt, and diſtribute the Beneficence received, in the moſt advantageous and œconomical manner.

The miſeries and diſtreſſes to which they were witneſſes, in their examination of the ſeveral Gaols, ſo ſtrongly impreſſed their hearts, and ſo many proper objects ſtill remained to be diſcharged, that they unitedly requeſted the Author of this Diſcourſe to print it, with an account of their proceedings; that not only the Congregations, who had ſo kindly adminiſtered to the good work, might be encouraged to perſevere in the ſame *Labours of Love*, by ſeeing the happy fruits of their liberality, but that the Public alſo might be ſtimulated to a laudable imitation, and help forward the charitable deſign. Happy will the Writer think himſelf, if a compliance with this requeſt of his friends can by any means advance the benevolent work; he readily appropriates to that end, his little Eſſay (deſigned and penned, in the fulneſs of his heart, ſolely for the *Day*) and heartily wiſhes it may ſerve to procure ſuch a ſupply from the generous and humane, as will enable the Committee to perfect their hoſpitable purpoſes, and to open the Priſon-gates to every induſtrious and deſerving priſoner.

It may be proper juſt to ſignify, that this relief has been, and is intended to be, confined to thoſe, who could not avail themſelves of the preſent Inſolvent Act; and who, therefore, are doubtleſs greater objects of commiſeration; ſince without ſome ſuch aſſiſtance as the preſent, they may continue *Years* in Priſon, miſerable in themſelves, and uſeleſs to the community.

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Thatched-House Tavern, St. James's,
April 16, 1772.

The Committee appointed to distribute the Money collected for the Relief of persons confined for small Debts

REPORT,

THAT out of 109 Supplicants for this Charity, they selected 34, most of whom have large Families, and appeared to be useful Members of Society: Some of them were confined only for their Fees, and the Debts of the others the Committee compounded on the best Terms they could. The Objects who were aged and infirm, are restored to their Friends; others, who were with their Wives and Families in Prison, are restored to the Manufactures wherein they were skilled; particularly four Manufacturers, with their Wives and twenty-three Children, were taken out of Prison for the trifling Sum of 15l. 1s. 3d. except one of the Women, who died of a broken Heart and the Goal Distemper, before Relief could be administered.

The Utility of this Charity to the Public will appear, from the Consideration that every Man's Labour may be estimated, at an Average, to be worth to the Community 2s. 6d. per Day, or 39£. a Year: So that the Confinement of the four Manufacturers abovementioned, occasioned a loss to the Public at the Rate of 156£. annually, over

and above what the Women and ſome of the Children, might have earned; all of whom, by a voluntary Confinement with the Father, were not only prevented from ſuch Earnings, but became liable to the Conſequences of habitual Indolence, Filth, Diſeaſe, and Vice; and probably, in a ſhort Time, would have become Nuiſances to the Public, and obnoxious to the Penal Laws.

Of the remaining 75 Suppliants, 19 appear to be the greateſt Objects of Compaſſion, all of whom may be diſcharged for leſs than one Hundred Pounds: And of the reſt, many are ſuch as well deſerve to ſhare the Mercy of the Public; if it were poſſible, by future Contributions, to extend that Mercy to them. But thoſe who wiſh to know more reſpecting theſe unfortunate Men, may be fully ſatisfied by applying to the Committee at the *Thatched-Houſe*, where they may read the Petitions, and hear a true State of the Difficulties and Diſtreſſes of the Priſoners at preſent confined: For, willing to preſerve, amidſt their charitable Aid, a Delicacy and Regard to the Unfortunate, it is hoped the Public will judge it not improper, that all mention of Names is omitted.

THE

THE PRISONER RELEASED, &c.

MATT. Ch. xxv. Ver. 36, latter part.

I WAS IN PRISON, AND YE CAME UNTO ME.

AMONGST that variety of arguments, which tend to demonſtrate the truth and divine original of the Chriſtian Faith, there is none more perſuaſive and convincing than that which is drawn from the *ſpirit* of this faith;---from that humane and benevolent diſpoſition which it inculcates, as its great and diſtinguiſhing characteriſtick. Every Precept laid down by the wiſe and gracious Author of this Religion is replete with good-will to Man: Every action of his life emphatically expreſſes the ſame benign tendency: nay, and as love, univerſal love to all mankind, conſtitutes, if I may ſo ſay, the very ſum and ſubſtance of his doctrine, ſo he has poſitively declared it the eſſential badge and mark of all his true Diſciples. *This is* MY *Commandment*, my peculiar and diſtinguiſhing commandment, *that ye love one another: By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Treading in the ſteps of their divine Maſter, well informed of his doctrine, and full of his ſpirit, his immediate ſucceſſors in the great work of

propagating the Goſpel were diligent to inculcate the ſame maxims of humanity. Hear how St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf on the ſubject, in his 12th Chapter to the Romans;---a Chapter more fraught with ſublime Morality, than the moſt elaborate treatiſes of antiquity.---*Let love be without diſſimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good: Be kindly affectioned one towards another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.---Diſtributing to the neceſſity of the Saints; given to Hoſpitality. Bleſs them who perſecute you: Bleſs, and curſe not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: For he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law.*

And, in perfect conformity with theſe heavenly, theſe ſublime and bleſſed ſentiments, the divine St. *John*,---who lay in the boſom of Jeſus, and thence imbibed, as it were, the very ſoul of love,---exhorts, with his uſual ſweetneſs and affection, *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for* GOD *is* LOVE. *If we love one another, God,* that pure eſſential LOVE, *dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

So ſhining a mark of excellence and ſuperiority ſtamped upon the religion of Chriſt, cannot fail at once to convince us of its truth, and to prove it worthy of the exalted ſource from whence it is derived; worthy of the wiſe and univerſal parent of mankind.

mankind. Solicitous, in the boundleſs riches of his benignity, for the welfare of thoſe creatures whom his ſovereign hands haʌe formed, he hath been pleaſed not only to interweave in the very texture of their inmoſt nature a ſtrong principle of ſympathy, humanity, or compaſſion;---a principle, which we find powerfully operating, as well amidſt the wildeſt *Hordes* of the *Tartars*, as amongſt the moſt poliſhed European nations;---but, to encourage and improve this principle, to exalt and ſublimate it even to a divine perfection, he hath conſtituted the active and univerſal diſplay of it, to be the great, the indiſpenſible characteriſtick of that important revelation which he hath made by his only-begotten Son. A revelation fraught with innumerable bleſſings to man; but by nothing more amply atteſting the Almighty's wiſdom and goodneſs, than by the forcible manner in which it enjoins univerſal charity, univerſal good-will; a ſpirit of unbounded love, of unlimited mercy and tenderneſs to all the human race.

A Divine Revelation, delivered to free moral agents, and to be propagated by human means, muſt and can have only ſuch influence and effects, as are conſiſtent with thoſe agents, with thoſe means. It can urge no irreſiſtible force: It muſt, it can operate on free and rational minds only by the means of moral ſuaſion. And hence we may fully ſatisfy ourſelves whence it comes to paſs, that although the Chriſtian Religion inculcates in this ſtrong emphatic manner the practice of univerſal

benevolence

benevolence and love, yet ſo many are found, in countries profeſſing that religion, not only void of each, but palpably actuated by the principles diametrically oppoſite. The fault lies not in the religion, or in the doctrine; but, unqueſtionably, with thoſe who receive it not in its truth and perfection; hardening their minds againſt it, and encouraging diſpoſitions, which are not more contrary than they are hateful and pernicious. Indeed, if on this account any reaſonable objection could be urged againſt the Chriſtian Syſtem, (which certainly there cannot) aſſuredly the ſame, or even a ſtronger objection might be urged againſt the very being and excellence of that principle of Sympathy or Compaſſion, which we have remarked to be implanted and interwoven in the human nature. For, if the malevolent and uncharitable act contrary to the principles of their Chriſtian faith, they certainly act as contrary to that great law of God, impreſſed upon their nature: and of conſequence, before we can draw any concluſions derogatory to that faith, we muſt draw concluſious as derogatory to that principle; which I ſuppoſe will never be allowed; all the world agreeing to honour and eſtimate that principle in the higheſt degree. And therefore, upon the ſame foundation, the Chriſtian religion muſt ſtand equally free from blame or cenſure.

But though I have ſaid thus much to remove a difficulty, which ſome have preſſed with ſeeming triumph, and others of better minds have felt with ſome

ſome diſquietude; yet it is a fact not to be denied, that wherever the Chriſtian religion hath been ſpread and propagated, and eſpecially where it hath been profeſſed in its greateſt purity, a ſpirit of humanity and benevolence hath diffuſed itſelf: Mankind have become more civilized and more compaſſionate: A thouſand barbarous cuſtoms and practices, which, if need were, I could eaſily enumerate*, have been diſcountenanced and diſuſed: and the ſpirit of the religion of Jeſus hath palpably and extenſively diſplayed itſelf in the human heart and manners.

It is with a ſingular ſatisfaction that I obſerve we need not go further than our own KINGDOM for a ſufficient teſtimony to the truth of what I have advanced. Conſider it in the times of barbarous uncultivation; conſider it in the days of darkneſs and idolatry; nay, conſider it even when more refined and civilized, yet under the bondage of Popiſh ſuperſtition and ignorance; and then compare it with its preſent ſtate! when truth ſhines with undiminiſhed ſplendor; when liberty of conſcience and free enquiry are univerſally allowed and indulged; when the faith of Chriſt is profeſſed in as much purity, and underſtood with as much preciſion, as perhaps in any age; and then ſay, Do we not plainly trace out in the character and manners of our times, the high influence of the genuine

* See Doctor *Robertſon*'s admirable Sermon on the time of Chriſt's appearance in the world.

genuine *ſpirit* of that faith?---the influence I mean of that humanity, that benevolence, whereof I have been ſpeaking.

For though, unqueſtionably, many vices and evils abound amongſt us,---evils and vices, which, it is to be feared, will always abound more or leſs in a great, a wealthy, and a populous nation like this;---though the ſerious eye diſcerns, and the feeling heart laments many, far too many deviations from the paths of truth and virtue: Yet, ſurely, it is not to be controverted or denied even by the moſt miſanthropic and ſevere, "That a ſpirit of humanity characteriſes our nation." The hearts of Engliſhmen are as tender to feel, as their hands are ready to relieve. Amidſt the moſt ſhining inſtances of intrepidity and courage, our heroes abroad have given teſtimony to this national ſpirit by deeds of the moſt extenſive benevolence and humane compaſſion: while our countrymen at home have not been behind hand with them in ſuccouring diſtreſs, and applying the lenient hand of mercy and relief to ſorrow and ſuffering, in whatever ſhape they have preſented themſelves.

"For my own part, I cannot but felicitate my Country on the prevalence of a ſpirit at once ſo honourable and ſo advantageous: A ſpirit, which, while it does credit to human nature, is, and muſt be highly acceptable to the great Being who formed that nature; and appointed LOVE, appointed benevolence, as its characteriſtic law! May we not

not reaſonably hope, my beloved, that the prevalence of this ſpirit, ſo eſtimable in the ſight of God our Saviour, will plead with his mercy, ſtrongly plead in behalf of our nation, ſo eminently bleſt and favoured by him; will ſtand in the gap between us and our manifold offences, and ſecure to us, through many generations, thoſe high felicities ſo peculiarly our own!

Oh may his goodneſs not only bleſs our land with every deſirable bleſſing; not only pour forth more abundantly into every heart that ſpirit of benevolence, which hath already been productive of ſo many laudable undertakings! but may his providential care proſper and ſucceed every ſuch undertaking! May the dew of his mercy fall richly upon every good, every compaſſionate deſign; and cauſe each one of them to flouriſh abundantly, and bring forth the moſt deſirable fruits, to the encouragement and ſatisfaction of the promoters, to the advantage and comfort of thoſe who partake them!"*

But, while thus felicitating ourſelves and our country on the prevalence of the genuine ſpirit of Chriſtian benevolence and mercy amongſt us; while wiſhing proſperity and good luck in the name of the Lord to every inſtitution and to every effort of

* It is to be hoped this ſhort Quotation from a diſcourſe before publiſhed, will be pardoned and allowed by the Candid, as the preſent was never deſigned for publication. See "Sermon before Governors of the Magdalen, preached at St. George's Hanover ſquare."

of that merciful and philanthropic ſpirit: You will allow me to requeſt your more particular attention at preſent to an *Object*, which appears to have an high claim on our humanity; and which will afford you, my brethren, an ample opportunity to verify the obſervations we have made on our national ſpirit and character.

The object I wiſh to recommend, is "The Relief of poor Debtors, confined in priſon for ſmall Debts?"

It is not by any means my purpoſe to enter at large into the conſideration of Impriſonment for debt; a topic at preſent much agitated, and doubtleſs extremely important. The ſubject is not only far too complicated in itſelf, but certainly, in a great meaſure, foreign to the buſineſs of this place. Leaving it therefore to thoſe venerable ſages of the law, with whoſe wiſdom, juſtice, and humanity, the ſacred rights of Engliſhmen are ſecurely lodged; I ſhall only juſt obſerve, that though compaſſion would ever incline me to take the ſide of the unfortunate Debtor; yet due conſideration ſhould be paid to the claims of the Creditor; or the intereſts of ſociety may be wounded even more by a too indulgent lenity, than by what ſome may ſuppoſe, a too rigid ſeverity.

But, whatever may be neceſſary in ſuch caſes and circumſtances for the intereſts of ſociety, one poſition may be laid down, and will be received, I apprehend, with the general ſuffrage: "That thoſe unhappy perſons, who, by a ſeries of miſ-

fortunes,

fortunes, have been reduced to a ſtate of inſolvency, and have honeſtly and unreſervedly given up their All, ought not, upon any of the principles of humanity or policy, to be confined in priſon, and reſtrained from a poſſibility of procuring their bread, or of doing juſtice to their creditors." And I am happy to find that my ſentiments on this topick are ſtrongly ſupported by the excellent and humane author of "*The principles of Penal Law*," a work which does no leſs credit to the heart, than to the judgment and abilities of the writer. He obſerves, "That the caſe of a confined Debtor, whoſe confinement is the mere conſequence of inevitable misfortune, without any mixture of criminality or neglect on his own part, is extremely pitiable, and contradictory to every juſt principle of Legiſlation."*

May I not venture to go one ſtep farther than this benevolent writer hath advanced, and to ſay, "Suppoſing the perſon confined is not perfectly free from all blame; ſuppoſe inſtances of miſconduct *may* be urged againſt him; yet, if he is wholly inſolvent; if he hath abſolutely and unreſervedly given up all; is not his caſe extremely pitiable, if confinement be added to the reſt of his misfortunes? and does it not ſeem contradictory to every juſt principle of Legiſlation, to every principle of equity, of humanity, of religion, to augment the load of ſuch a wretch's woe, by depriving both

* Page 52. 2d. Edit.

both ſociety and himſelf of any benefit from his future induſtry and labour?"

From a numberleſs variety of accidental circumſtances (ſays the Author juſt quoted) which happen in the courſe of human tranſactions, it muſt fall to the lot of many to become inſolvent. *Debtors* therefore, though certainly a ſpecies of criminals, ſhould in general be conſidered rather as *unfortunate* than *culpable*." And if Debtors in general ſhould be conſidered in this view; if all, under that unhappy predicament, have "a claim to humane treatment," how much rather ſhould we view in this light, ſhould we treat in this manner, thoſe, who in the circumſtances of Debt juſt now defined, are by the univerſal voice, by the general deciſion of humanity and policy, objects of the trueſt compaſſion.

It is on behalf of ſuch that I now appear an humble advocate; imploring your generous and conſiderate aid towards the relief and enfranchiſement of ſuch poor men as, confined in priſon for *ſmall debts*, are unable to pay, and are loſt to their families and the publick. The multiplicity of Debtors confined in our ſeveral gaols, renders it impoſſible for ſo feeble an effort as the preſent to look to, or to think of relieving any but ſuch as are impriſoned for ſmall ſums. However, were an effort of this kind ſeconded and generally purſued, doubtleſs numbers of theſe unfortunate men would reap benefit from it; and it would prove a temporary ſupply, a palliative at leaſt, till the wiſdom

wiſdom of Legiſlature ſhall think fit to interpoſe, and to offer a perfect remedy for the evil. But, be that matter as it may; be our efforts ſeconded or not, ſuffice it for *us*, my beloved, that we do our parts as men, and as chriſtians; ſuffice it for us, that we gratify our humanity and benevolence with the exquiſite luxury of contributing what we are able, towards the liberty, the comfort, the peace;—towards the deliverance of our fellow-creatures from impriſonment and miſery! If *one*, if it were but one honeſt and worthy man that ſhould reap the fruits of our charitable aid; if our compaſſionate hands could unlock the priſon gates only to one diſtreſt and forlorn ſufferer, reſtoring him to freedom, to induſtry, to his afflicted wife and miſerable children, ſurely it were a deed truly meritorious in itſelf, and ſuch as muſt refreſh the benevolent heart contributing towards it.

To move ſuch benevolent hearts, already ſufficiently ſtimulated to acts of Mercy by their own genuine feelings, I need not exaggerate,—indeed it ſeems impoſſible to exaggerate the wretched circumſtances of a man, torn for a little trifling ſum, which all his induſtry has not been able to procure, and which, perhaps, has been expended in neceſſary ſupplies for the ſupport of his family;—for that trifling ſum, torn from his humble, but beloved dwelling; torn from the wife he affectionately regards; torn from the children dearer to his embraces than life: his humble ſubſtance rudely ſeized, and cruelly diſperſed; and

himself, hurried by the unfeeling hands of imposition and insolence to a loathsome prison!—there to remain, deprived of all the common comforts of life; of that free air, which all-bounteous Heaven ordained to breathe on all its creatures; of that liberty, which to Man is justly the most invaluable of blessings; of that peace of mind, which gives to every sphere of life its zest and relish: deprived of every means to supply his own wants, or that loved family's wants, which possibly oppress him much more than his own; deprived, in short, almost deprived even of the wretch's last source and support, of hope itself, and left in loneliness and solitude to indulge his own sad reflections; or, what is worse, far worse, prevented perhaps from indulging those or any other reflections, by the obstreperous and abandoned crew, who are not less hardened by their confinement than by their crimes.

Oh ye blest, and ye fortunate! you, whom Providence hath graciously exempted from these complicated sorrows; you, within whose doors importunate want never dares to intrude; you, who can walk forth at will, and enjoy the common bounties of Heaven—air, health, freedom, peace;—Come with me, ye happy ones, and let us for a moment visit the disconsolate debtor, the father, the husband, the man; sinking under every sorrow which humanity can sustain; pallid with grief, sordid in his dress; dejected, drooping, miserable; famine, confinement, and sorrow fixing

at

at once their fierce fangs upon him, and tearing with more than vulture keenneſs every tendereſt ſtring which winds about his heart!

Oh, ye bleſt, and ye free! diſdain not to viſit, to commiſerate, to relieve ſuch a ſufferer; for he is not only a *Man*, a fellow-creature, and ſo juſtly intitled to your regard and relief, but he is a *Chriſtian*; and in viſiting and relieving him,—hear, O Heaven, and give ear, O Earth, to the great, the aſtoniſhing, the animating truth!—In viſiting and relieving him, you viſit and relieve even *Chriſt himſelf*; for thus runs the ſacred, the ſolemn Declaration from the mouth of that ever gracious Redeemer —*I was in Priſon, and ye came unto* ME.

Were there no reaſons of ſound policy, or of ſympathetic humanity to urge; were it impoſſible to offer any arguments of true pity and compaſſion in behalf of unfortunate and inſolvent priſoners; yet, ſurely, it were enough with *Chriſtians* to awaken all their zeal, and to call forth all their aid, to hear that their great, their glorious and ever bleſſed Maſter; He who, when they were Debtors indeed, and had nothing to pay, not only frankly forgave, but died to diſcharge their Debt; He, who ever lives to reward their munificence, and to crown with eternal bleſſings their acts of benevolence and mercy; to hear *him* declare, that in viſiting and relieving the *Priſoner*, they in fact viſit and relieve *Him*: That whatever they charitably do even to the leaſt of thoſe fellow-creatures, whom he condeſcends to call his *Brethren*, he eſteems and receives

it as done unto himſelf; *In as much as ye have done it unto the leaſt of theſe* MY BRETHREN, *ye have done it* UNTO ME!

It is not poſſible to produce a more convincing argument than this, of that great poſition with which I ſet out, and which I have endeavoured to prove; "That a ſpirit of humanity is the great, the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of the Chriſtian Religion." The divine Author of that religion, on his ſolemn ſeat of awful and tremendous judgment has conſtituted the ſacred acts of humanity and benevolence, as the ſolemn, the deciſive teſt of his eternal approbation or diſpraiſe: Who then ſhall dare to neglect or deſpiſe thoſe ſacred acts?

Be it ours, dearly beloved, to excel in all ſuch acts: and, with a view to that tremendous day, let us be ſolicitous, during this ſhort time of trial allowed us, to improve every occaſion afforded us of doing good, of ſhewing mercy and loving kindneſs. In the preſent inſtance eſpecially, let us demonſtrate not only that the genuine Spirit of Chriſtianity influences our ſouls, but let us add a further proof of that National Spirit, which we have aſſerted to be the conſequence of the former, as well as the happy characteriſtick of our times; Let us add, I ſay, a farther and a noble proof of it, by liberally contributing towards the relief of the unhappy Debtor, by ſetting open the doors of confinement, and letting the Priſoner go free.

Thus ſhall we gratify the beſt and moſt honourable feelings of our nature; thus ſhall we reſtore

to

to many fellow-creatures ſome of the higheſt comforts and privileges which belong to mankind; thus ſhall we *deliver the poor that cry, and the afflicted who have none to help them*; thus the *bleſſings of them who are ready to periſh will come upon us*; and thus, which is infinitely more than all, the bleſſings of HIM will come upon us, who is no leſs bounteous than he is almighty to beſtow: and to whom,—the great Judge of men,—be aſcribed all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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